



Sri Buddha-Avatara

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Mar 25, 2012 — CANADA (SUN) — From "Dasavatara - The Ten Manifestations of God" by Swami B.B. Tirtha.

Among the Dasavatara, Sri Buddha is the ninth avatara. Additionally, Sri Buddha is the twenty-fourth lila-avatara.

In order to condemn the practice of animal sacrifice, Supreme Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of Buddha. Srila Jayadeva Gosvami prays to the Lord of the universe in his Dasavatara-stotra:

*nindasi yajna-vidher ahaha sruti-jatam
sadaya-hridaya-darsita-pasu-ghatam
kesava dhrita-buddha-sarira jaya jagadisa hare
(Sri Jayadeva's Dasavatara-stotra, 9th Verse)*

"O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of Buddha! All glories unto You! O Buddha of compassionate heart, You decry the slaughtering of poor animals performed according to the rules of Vedic sacrifice."

The name of Buddha also appears in the verse that describes the ten avatars in Srimad-Bhagavatam:

*matsya kurmo varahasca nrisimha vamanastatha
ramo ramasca ramasca buddha kalki ca te dasah*

In the dasavatara verse of Sahitya-darpana (a Bengali reference encyclopedia), we find the names of Buddha and Kalki. The Agni, Vayu and Skanda Puranas also mention the name of Buddha, as does the following verse of Srimad-Bhagavatam:

*tatah kalau sampravritte sammohaya sura-dvisham
buddho namnanjana-sutah kikateshu bhavishyati
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.3.24)*

"Then, in the beginning of Kali-yuga the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Anjana, in the province of Gaya (Bihar) just for the purpose of infatuating those who are envious of the faithful demigods."

In Chapters 17-18 of the 3rd Section of Vishnu Purana, Buddha has been designated as 'Mayamoha'. Once, while bathing in the waters of the Yamuna, Akrura was astonished to see Krishna-Balarama within the river. Coming out, he saw Them seated in a chariot as They had been before appearing in the water. Again he immersed himself in the water, and saw the yellow-clad four-handed Vasudeva Sri Krishna along with His associates, graciously seated on the lap of the thousand-hooded Sri Anantadeva while being worshiped by Brahma and other demigods. At that time, he prayed to the Lord in the following manner:

*namo buddhaya suddhaya daitya-danava-mohine
mleccha-praya-kshatra-hantre namas te kalki-rupine
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 10.40.22)*

"O Lord! I offer my obeisances unto Your form of Buddha, who, possessing a faultless nature, deluded the miscreants by composing anti-Vedic scriptures. I also offer obeisances unto Your Kalki form, the annihilator of the wicked kshatriyas who are no better than barbarians."

The Vedas encode instructions according to the eligibility or qualification of various living beings, especially human beings. But in the course of time, ignorant men took the tamasika orders to be the only instruction of the Vedas and engaged in the extensive killing of animals, sometimes even sacrificing human beings during worship of the demigods. At that time, the Supreme Lord descended in the form of Buddha and outwardly rejected the teachings of the Vedas for the welfare of human beings incapable of comprehending the true teachings of the Vedas. This implies that He disputed and cancelled His own prior teachings, propounded the futility of belief in God and preached to human beings four noble truths, to free them from their violent practices. This act of Buddha provided instantaneous benediction to mankind of that period. As Lord Buddha was the Supreme Lord Himself, many people resolved to follow ahimsa-dharma-the path of non-violence, due to His influence. As a result of non-violence, the hearts of human beings became pious and their qualifications gradually increased, so Lord Siva appeared as Sankaracarya. He re-established the supreme authenticity and decorum of the Vedas, and founded the philosophy of 'brahmakarana-vada' (Brahman as ultimate cause). In later ages, the Vaishnava stalwarts built the philosophy of bhakti upon this same foundation stone. From the personal and aggregate point of view, these are the steps of progress.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the Lord Himself, removed the incompleteness of the previously propagated philosophies through His 'acintya-bhedabheda-tattva' philosophy (the principle of inconceivable simultaneous distinction and non-distinction).

It is said that Sakyasimha Buddha, the son of Suddhodana and Maya, and Buddha-avatara,

the Vaishnavas' object of adoration, are not one and the same person. Our Most Revered Nityalilapraavishta Om Vishnupada 108 Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada has clearly said, "Sakyasimha Buddha was merely a vastly learned person, so we cannot call him the original Buddha or Lord Buddha."

Acarya Sri Sankara has by mistake referred to Maya's son, Buddha, as 'Sugata Buddha' in the following commentary:

*sarvatha api anadaraniya ayam sugata-samayah sreyaskamaih
iti abhiprayah*

Amarakosha-grantha (Sanskrit dictionary) states:

*sarvajnah sugato buddho dharmarajastathagatah
samastabhadro bhagavan marajillokajijjinah
shadabhijno dasabalo 'dvayavadi vinayakah
munindrah srighanah sasta munih sakyamunistu yah*

"All-Knowing, Transcendental, Buddha, King of Righteousness, He Who Has Come, Beneficent, All-Encompassing, Lord, Conqueror of the God of Love-Mara, Victorious of Three Worlds, He Who Controls His Senses, Protector from the Six Enemies, Possessor of the Ten Powers, Speaker of Monism (One Absolute), Teacher, Lord of the Sages, Embodiment of Splendor and Eminent Saint." In his commentary on the above verse, Srila Ragunatha Cakravarti has written:

"All eighteen names of Buddha from 'sarvajna' (omniscient) to 'sakyamuni', refer to Vishnu-avatara Buddha. Therefore, 'Sugata' clearly refers only to Vishnu-avatara Buddha.

*sa sakyasimhah sarvarthasiddhah sauddhodanisca sah
gautamascarkabandhusca mayadevisutasca sah*

"Teacher of the Sakyas, lion of the Sakyas, accomplisher of all goals, son of Suddhodana, of Gautama's line, friend of scholars, son of Mayadevi." Here, Srila Ragunatha Cakravarti has written:

ete sapta shakyabangshabatirneh buddhamuni bisheshe

"The seven aliases from 'sakyasimha Buddha' down to 'mayadevisuta' (the son of Mayadevi) refer to monks belonging to the Sakya Dynasty."

Thus, Sugata Buddha and Sunyavadi (Sakyasimha) Buddha are not the same person. Further evidence is found in Mr. H.T.Colebrooke's Amarakosha, published at Ramapura in 1807. It is written in Chapter 21, Page 178 of Lalitavistara-grantha that Gautama Buddha performed penances at the same place as the previous Buddha (Vishnu-avatara Buddha). Maybe it is for this reason that in later ages he and Lord Buddha are considered as being one:

*esha dharanimunde purvabuddhasanasthah
samartha dhanurgrihitva sunya nairatmavanaih
klesaripum nihatva drishtijalanca bhitva-siva
virajamsokam prapsyate bodhimagryam*

Currently this place is known as Buddha Gaya but Srimad-Bhagavatam refers to it as Kikata Pradesa:

*tatah kalau sampravritte sammohaya sura-dvisham
buddho namnanjana-sutah kikateshu bhavishyati
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.3.24)*

"Thereafter, in the twenty-first manvantara at the beginning of Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, the son of Anjana, in Kikata Pradesa (the province of Gaya-Bihar), just for the purpose of deluding those who are envious of the faithful demigods."

According to Sri Visvanatha Cakravarti Ohakura's commentary:

*anjana suto 'jina sutasceti pathadvayam
kikateshu madhye gayapradese*

"The names Anjanasuta and Ajinasuta can both be found in the above verse. The province of Gaya has been called Kikateshu."

Srila Sridhara Svamipada has written in his commentary:

*buddhavataramaha tata iti
anjanasya sutah
ajinasuta iti pathe ajino 'pi sa eva
kikateshu madhye gayapradese*

"Buddha-avatara refers to Buddha who is the son of Anjana, and also in another reading, the son of Ajina. In the above verse, the name is written as Ajina or Anjana, and Kikata refers to Gaya Pradesa."

It is written in the 29th Verse, 36th Chapter of Sri Nrisimha Purana:

kalau prapte yatha buddho bhavennarayana prabhuh

"Lord Narayana appeared as Buddha when the age of Kali started."

This clearly implies that Lord Buddha appeared five thousand years ago. The following verse can be found in the second paragraph of Nirnaya-sindhu:

jyaishtha sukladitiyayam buddhajanma bhavishyati

"Buddha will take birth on the 2nd day of the sukla-paksha of the month of Jyaishtha."

Another part of this book describes the mode of worshipping Buddha:

pausha suklasya saptamyam kuryyat bhuddhasya pujanam

"Worship Lord Buddha on the 7th day of the sukla-paksha of the month of Pausha."

This is the prescription for the worship of Buddha, the avatara of the Supreme Lord. The full moon day of the month of Vaisakha, known as 'Buddha-purnima', is to be celebrated for both Buddhas, subject to consideration of both Buddhas together.

In Sri Madhvacarya's commentary on Verse 1.3.24 of Srimad-Bhagavatam, from his book Bhagavata-tatparya, the following quotation from Brahmanda Purana has been referred to:

*mohanartham danavanam balarupi pathisthitah
putram tam kalpayamasa mudhabudhirjinah svayam
tatah sammohayamasa jinadyana suramsakan
bhagavan vagbhirugrabhirahimsa vacibhirharih
(Brahmanda Purana)*

"In order to delude the demons, He (Lord Buddha) was present in the form of a child on the way while the fool, Jina (a demon), imagined Him to be his son. Later on, Lord Sri Hari (as avatara-Buddha) expertly deluded Jina and other demons by His strong words of non-violence."

There is an authentic Buddhist book, Lankavatara-sutra, in which Ravana, the king of Lanka, prays to Jina's son, the ancient Lord Buddha, and to all the Buddhas and Buddhas' sons who would appear in the future, via this eulogy (stava):

*atha ravano lankadhipatih gathagiten anugayati sma
lankavatarasutram vaih purvabuddhanuvarnitam
smarami purvakaih buddhairjinaputra-puraskritaih
putrametannigadyate bhagavanapi bhashatam
bhavishyantyanapate kale buddha buddhasutasca ye*

Therefore, this source leaves no doubt that the ancient avatara-Buddha and the modern Gautama Buddha are not the same person.

Buddha-avatara has been discussed in various Puranas such as the Linga, Bhavishya, Varaha, Agni, Vayu, Skanda, Vishnu and many others. In the 17th and 18th Chapters of the 3rd Section of Vishnu Purana, Buddha is referred to as Mayamoha. It should be remembered that the Buddha-avatara whose narrations are found in various Puranas and other scriptures, is not the nihilistic Buddha, the son of Suddhodana.

namo buddhaya suddhaya daitya danava mohine

The preceding eulogy to Lord Buddha, taken from Akrura's prayer in Srimad-Bhagavatam (10-40-22), is the essence of all the Vedas, Vedanta, Puranas, Itihasas and other scriptures. The meaning of this prayer is:

"O Lord, I offer my obeisances unto Your faultless beguiling form of Lord Buddha who enchanted the demons and devils by composing anti-Vedic mantras."

Commenting on this, Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura has written:

*suddhaya vedaviruddha sastra pravarttakatve 'pi
nirddoshaya*

"The meaning of the word 'suddhaya' is that although He is the founding element of anti-Vedic literature, yet He remains inculpable."

Therefore, by establishing sastras opposed to the Vedas, He (avatara- Buddha) hypnotised devils and demons. This is the reason why some writers of Buddha's biography consider avatara-Buddha and human Buddha to be the same.

In Srimad-Bhagavatam (6.8.19), King Indra prays to Lord Buddha with the mantra, buddhas tu pashanda-gana-pramadat. This mantra is from the Narayana-kavaca of Visvarupa, the son of Sage Tvashta. By reciting this mantra Indra prayed, "O Lord Buddha! Save me from the defect of indifference born out of atheistic hypocrisy."

This means that Lord Buddha, in His asura-vimohana-lila (the pastime of hypnotising the demons), deluded the wicked natured people by establishing scriptures opposed to the Vedas. "Save me Lord Buddha from the terrible offence of disobeying the Vedas due to ignorance of their secret meanings." Factually, Lord Buddha is not a condemner of the Vedas for any reason whatsoever. This pastime is meant only to mesmerise the demons. It is written in the 40th chapter of the Mahesvara section of Skanda Purana that:

"After the passing of 3,600 years of Kali-yuga, Lord Buddha, the avatara of Vishnu, the saviour of dharma, will appear in the Magadha territory from the womb of Anjani, fathered by Hemasadena. He will perform many glorious tasks and rule over the earth containing seven islands, for sixty-four years. Then, safeguarding His glories with His devotees, He will retreat to His abode."

Thus, we can see by the authentic words of genuine scriptures, that Lord Buddha and Sakyasimha/Gautama Buddha are not the same. The Lord has established many anti-Vedic scriptures for deluding the demons. Other Buddhas also followed Him and propagated anti-Vedic nihilism. That is why many doubts arise, as all of them have been mentioned together in several places. Srila Krishnadasa Kaviraja Gosvami has written:

veda na maniya baudha haya ta nastika

"Without respecting the Vedas, Buddha has become atheistic." In India, those who have no faith in the Vedas are considered to be atheistic.

According to the German scholar Max Muller, Sakyasimha Buddha was born in the Lumbini Forest of Kapilavastu in 477 B.C. Ancient Kapilavastu is a famous district situated near Nepal. Gautama's father's name was Suddhodana and His mother's name was Mayadevi. Anjana's son and Maya's son both share the same name but one appeared at Gaya and the

other at Kapilavastu. Thus, the appearance places and parents of Vishnu Buddha and Gautama Buddha are totally different. Because the human Buddha was unable to understand the asura-vimohana-lila of Lord Vishnu Buddha, he propagated anti-Vedic nihilism.

A Short Biography of Gautama Buddha

There was a king of the Ikshvaku Dynasty named Sujata, ruling in the western side of Saketa Nagara. Sujata had five sons and five daughters. He had special affection for his five sons.

Coincidentally, Sujata met a flirtatious woman by the name of Jenti. By her he begot a son, Jayanta. As Sujata was in love with Jenti, he became desirous to give her a boon. Jenti prayed for the exile of Sujata's other five sons and for her own son, Jayanta, to be crowned as heir to the throne. Although Sujata was deeply disappointed upon hearing Jenti's words, still he felt compelled to grant her the boon so as to fulfil his own promise. The people were saddened when they heard of the exile of Sujata's sons, and consequently they accompanied them to the forest. The first place they reached was Kasi-kosala state, but eventually they came to the asrama of Kapila Āshi in the Himalayan region. At the asrama of Kapila Āshi, Sujata's sons fell in love with Kapila's daughters and subsequently married them. Hearing the news of his sons' marriage, Sujata also went to the asrama. Upon hearing all the relevant details, he declared the marriage to be proper and gave it his approval. Afterwards, Sujata's sons were known by the name 'Sakya'.

With the permission of Kapila Āshi, the Sakya-kumaras built a large city named Kapilavastu. The eldest son, Apura, became the king of that city and a beautiful girl named Amita was born into his dynasty. As an adult she became afflicted with leprosy and because of this, her brother took her away to the Himalayan Mountains. There, he enclosed her in a large cave stocked with many foodstuffs. Before returning he shut the entrance to the cave with a large boulder. Fortunately, Amita's leprosy was eventually cured by the cave's heat and she regained her lost beauty. Then, fortune continuing to smile upon her, a tiger came and removed the boulder obstructing the entrance to the cave.

Once, a king by the name of Kola went there and saw the beautiful girl Amita. They married and she later gave birth to thirty-two sons. Reaching maturity, the sons came to know about their ancestors from their mother. Consequently, they came to Kapilavastu and in the course of events, married the Sakyas daughters. Thereafter, they came to be known as the 'Kaliya Dynasty'.

In the land of the Sakyas was a district named Devadeha. The king of Devadeha, Subhuti, had five daughters. The king of Kapilavastu, Suddhodana, married two daughters of Subhuti named Maya and Mahaprajavati Gautami. On the full moon day of the month of Vaisakha, Mayadevi gave birth to a son in a beautiful garden called Lumbini, near Kapilavastu. It appeared that with the birth of a son, all the desires of Suddhodana had been fulfilled, thus he named his son Sarvartha-siddhi or alternatively, Siddhartha. Seven days after Siddhartha's birth, his mother Mayadevi died. At that time, Siddhartha was brought to Kapilavastu to be brought up by his mother's sister, Mahaprajavati Gautami.

A sage named Asita happened to live near the Himalayas. He came to Kapilavastu and upon seeing the twelve symptoms of a great person in Siddhartha, prophesied that if he continued to live within his worldly circuit, he would eventually go on to become a great emperor, but if he renounced his home he would become the knower of all knowledge-"Sambodhi." Therefore, Buddha was formerly known as Siddhartha, Gautama and Sakyasimha, and later became famous with yet one more name-"Bodhisattva."

In accordance with the Indian custom, upon reaching adulthood, he was sent to his gurudeva's house for a proper education. From Visvamitra Upadhyaya he learned Brahmi, Kharoshtri, Pushkarasadi, Angalipi and sixty-four other languages of various countries. He also became an expert in the Vedas and Upanishads. After returning from his guru's home, his father, Suddhodana, arranged for his marriage to Gopa, the daughter of Dandapani Sakya.

Although Siddhartha's father tried to ensnare him in worldly matters through marriage, Siddhartha was not at all interested in affairs of the world. Since childhood he had learned of the transient nature of things, so he possessed natural apathy for this world.

The causes of Siddhartha's apathy toward the material world have been described in the following way: One day, Siddhartha was going by chariot to visit a garden when he saw an extremely aged person who had been forsaken by his relatives. He was in a very weak and helpless condition. Seeing this old man, Siddhartha started to ponder over the observation that the human beings of this world are all so ignorant. Old age is inevitable and bound to attack all, one day or another.

Another day, at the southern gate of the city, Siddhartha saw a sick man in a very pitiful state who was smeared all over with excrement and urine. Seeing him, Siddhartha contemplated the fact that diseases are extremely dreadful. He found it very surprising that learned persons, despite being aware of these facts, were often quite busy merrymaking.

One day, at the western gate of the city, Siddhartha saw a dead man surrounded by a group of people who were hysterically lamenting and wailing in mournfulness. Seeing this sight, Siddhartha decided that there is no value to this life as it may end at any time.

Another day, at the northern gate of the city, Siddhartha saw a calm, abstemious and serious brahmachari (a celibate monk) peacefully wandering around with a begging bowl. The brahmachari mendicant, having given up all lust, material desires and pleasures while embracing asceticism, was wandering about in search of peace of mind and tranquillity. He was supporting his life by the collecting of very simple foodstuffs. Seeing his tranquil personage, devoid of all sorts of attachment and envy, Siddhartha decided that only this kind of lifestyle would provide eternal benediction to all living beings.

Observing Siddhartha's detachment from mundane issues, Suddhodana tried extremely hard to engage him in household life, but all his efforts went in vain. Siddhartha's charioteer, Chandoga, also advised him that he would never again obtain such a prosperous, affluent and pleasing place like Kapilavastu, even after rigorous penance. He further stated that it would be most inappropriate for him to leave his beautiful wife. Though Chandoga tried to negatively influence Siddhartha's urge to renounce this mundane world, he too failed in this task and at the midnight of Pushya-nakshatra-tithi, Siddhartha renounced the world.

At the time of renouncing the world, Siddhartha gave all the jewels he was wearing to his charioteer Chandoga. He even destroyed and threw away the crest on his forehead and donned saffron clothes. The three respective locations where Siddhartha separated from Chandoga, destroyed his crest and put on saffron clothes have been established as caitya (shrine).

Chandoga then returned to the capital, gave all the jewels of Siddhartha to King Suddhodana and narrated the whole incident to him. Upon hearing the details of Siddhartha's renunciation, overwhelmed by sorrow, his father began weeping. Seeing no possibility of Siddhartha's return, the grief stricken Suddhodana threw all the extremely precious jewels (abharana) of Siddhartha into a pond. Since that time the pond has been known by the name of Abharana.

When Siddhartha's wife awoke in the morning and heard the news of the renunciation of her husband, out of intense grief she cut off all her beautiful hair and cast away all the jewels from her body. She fell to the ground like a person severely wounded by a weapon and began weeping "Oh! I have lost all the pleasures of my life."

After giving up the world, Buddha or Bodhisattva, initially went to Vaisali City and observing the vow of celibacy, took initiation from Arariakalama Upadhyaya. He remained there for some time without finding any happiness, and eventually left for Magadha. There, he started begging for food for himself. When the Magadha king, Bimbisara, came to know about Siddhartha, he desired to give his whole empire to him. However, Bodhisattva replied, "These sensuous objects are poisonous. They are the treasure houses of unlimited vices. Afflicted by lust, people indulging in sensuous enjoyment, experience hellish torture. I regard the carnal desire as hateful as phlegm and bile. I have accepted asceticism with the

desire to attain boddhatva".

Bimbisara said, "I am a disciple of your father Suddhodana. If you attain boddhatva, I shall also follow this dharma (religion)". After that, Bodhisattva remained with Upadhyaya Rudraka for some time and undertook a spiritual education. There, while studying theology, he realised that the fire of knowledge is ignited only after the absolute disappearance of the desire to enjoy.

After this, he undertook severe penance for six years on the bank of Nairanjana River, near Uruvilva Village of Gaya. Gradually, his body began to whittle away. When Bodhisattva sat down in a yogic posture at Bodhidruma near the Nairanjana River, the enemy of sad-dharma, Mara (Kandarpa or Cupid, the god of sensuous love) tried to prevent him from attaining boddhatva. Rati (sexual pleasure), Trishna (greed) and Arati (affection) came in the form of three damsels and tried to distort and divert his attention by their numerous antics, but to no avail. Thus, Bodhisattva defeated Mara and his cohorts Rati, Trishna and Arati, and achieved absolute tranquillity.

Upon ascertaining the cause of the world's sorrows and the method of its prevention, Bodhisattva adopted the name 'Buddha' (the Enlightened One). He ascertained the cause of sorrow in the following twelve steps starting from one's previous birth (bhavacakra): 1) avidya (ignorance) causes 2) samskaras (impressions, present life volitional formations), which cause 3) vijñāna (knowledge), which leads to 4) namarupa (mind and form). Namarupa causes 5) shadayatana (sense perceptions or sense bases), which cause 6) sparsa (contact), which causes 7) vedana (pain or feeling) leading to 8) trishna (greed or craving). Trishna leads to 9) upadana (attachment), which causes 10) bhava (future life-becoming), which causes 11) jati (birth), which leads to 12) jara-marana (old age and death) as well as concomitant sorrow and other related miseries. Thus, ignorance or lack of knowledge is the cause of all miseries. After the attainment of boddhatva, Buddha stayed in Bodhidruma for one week.

By the influence of Buddhadeva, fifty-four Yuvarajas (crown princes), one thousand pilgrims, Sari's son-Maudgalyayana, and many other persons accepted Buddhism. When Buddhadeva came to Kapilavastu City, his father, Suddhodana was astonished to see him. Buddha's son-Rahul, stepbrother Nanda and cousins Aniruddha and Ananda Devadatta, also took shelter of the religion or sect founded by Buddhadeva. Prasenjit, the king of Kosala, also took initiation into Buddhism. After this, the king of Magadha, Bimbisara, along with his wife and many other persons, accepted Buddhism.

During his stay in Patali Village, Buddha educated the resident religious practitioners on the subject of the eradication of sorrow. He spoke about four noble truths: 1) the fact that suffering exists 2) the cause of suffering 3) the cessation of suffering and 4) the path one should follow to end suffering.

This world is full of miseries. There are specific reasons for these miseries and a method for inhibiting them. According to Buddha, it is useless to reason about or discuss on the basis of scripture, the form of the living being, the form of the Supreme Absolute or the form of the world. For example, say an arrow has pierced the chest of a person and he is writhing in immense pain. In such a situation, is it not useless to think about where the arrow came from and how it caused the injury? In the preceding circumstances, to pull the arrow out would be the best way of relieving the pain. In order to establish the propriety of such thoughts of Buddha, Buddhist philosophy was developed at a later date. No 'ism' of any kind can be adequately established without a foundation of proper philosophical principles.

According to Buddhist scriptures, hunger is more painful than disease and similarly, life is comparatively more troublesome than sorrow. Old age, disease, death and miseries are all concerns of the body. Therefore, until the cycle of birth and death of the body ends, miseries will continue. To restrict the misery-ridden aspect of life is final emancipation (nirvana), and only final emancipation can be the greatest pleasure.

*jighaccha parama roga sankhara parama duhkham
etam natva yathabhutam nirvanam paramam sukham*

According to Buddhist philosophy, nothing is stable for even more than a moment-neither the soul nor God possess stability. Here, the point to be pondered is that if the soul is impermanent, then upon what basis could the thesis of birth and rebirth be accepted? However, in Buddhist philosophy the concept of rebirth has in fact been accepted. To answer this doubt, the Buddhist philosophy states that when a body constituted of rupa-skandha (gross and subtle bodies), vedana-skandha (pain), samjna-skandha (difference), samskara-skandha (impressions) and vijnana-skandha (knowledge) appears in an aggregate of things, we erroneously think that to be the soul. Similarly, the rupa-vedana-skandha appears and disappears (or in other words, the material form is destroyed) every moment. According to Buddhism, existence does not end immediately after the destruction of the body. After death five types of births occur, although these are deemed as 'new birth' rather than 'rebirth'. This sequence ends with the destruction of greed and karma, and then finally the state of emancipation is attained. In other words, in Buddhist philosophy the veracity of the eternal soul, Vedas and Supreme Lord has been disregarded, which is why it is considered to be an atheistic philosophy.

After the disappearance of Buddha, this dharma was divided into two branches-'Hinayana' (Lesser Vehicle) and 'Mahayana' (Greater Vehicle). The followers of Hinayana have accepted the teachings of Buddha without deviation. This sect is not accessible to all, as it is the method for powerful and self-dependent devotees.

Over the course of time, the Buddhist religion was propagated to several countries where people following other religious systems gave up their particular faith and accepted Buddhist dharma. Consequently, sparks of emotions from the sentimental plane of their previously practised faiths and religions became transubstantiated into Buddhism. Therefore, the purity and rigidity of the Buddhist religion was compromised to a large extent. These transformed and expanded branches of Buddhism are called 'Mahayana'. This Mahayana sect is accessible to the general populace. A branch of Mahayana followers say that creation takes place from the void (sunya) and that dissolution returns to the void. Only the void is true and all other things are false. Nowadays, there is another branch under Mahayana, which regards Buddha as God, and regards faith in the Supreme Lord as a valid method.

In Buddhism, the procedure for attaining the state of 'sambodhi' or the state of final emancipation (nirvana), has been described in the following way:

Firstly, the five obstructions should be eradicated, i.e. kama (lust), himsa (violence), alasya (laziness or slothfulness), vicikitsa (doubt) and moha (ignorance). After this, the twenty-four negative emotions of the heart should be removed, i.e. krodha (anger), upanah (confinement), mriksapradana (hypocrisy), irshya (envy or jealousy), matsarya (malice), sathya, (wickedness), maya (delusion), mada (pride), nihimsa (killing), ahri (shamelessness), anapatrata (harshness), styana (stealing), uddhatya (haughtiness), asraddha (disrespect), kaupinya (sinfulness), pramada (inadvertence), mushitasmritya (remembrance of stolen things), vikshepa (distraction), asamprajanya-kaukritya (condemnable illicit birth), siddha (the seduction of material perfections or achievements), vitarka (argument) and vicara (thought). In short, the body is impure, distress is sorrowful, the heart is restless or fickle and matter is false. These four facts should always be kept in mind. Finally, the attributes of higher knowledge, memory, pious deeds, strength, affection, inquiry, emancipation and detachment must be cultivated. Only then can the state of samadhi be achieved.

There is no scripture directly written by Gautama Buddha himself. The disciples and subsequent followers of Buddhadeva have scripted his teachings in the Pali language. They are divided into three parts known as 1) Sukta-pitaka 2) Vinaya-pitaka and 3) Abhidharma-pitaka.

At a time when failure to comprehend the actual meaning of the scriptural teachings and consequently, violence in the guise of religion took precedence, the Supreme Lord appeared in the form of Buddha and rid mankind of such violence. It is for this very reason that non-violence (ahimsa) is regarded as the basis of Buddhism.

During his reign, the emperor of Magadha, King Asoka, developed a keen interest in Buddhism. He was deeply aggrieved by the merciless massacre in the Kalinga War, and this

transformed his heart. After this event, he took initiation into Buddhism from Upagupta, a Buddhist monk, and devoted himself to the preaching of the religion. Buddhism outside India was preached in China, Burma (Myanmar or Brahmadesa), Tibet, Japan, Thailand, Korea and Sri Lanka (South Simhala) and other places. Buddhism was propounded and propagated from India. However, due to the preaching of Sankaracarya, the effect of Buddhism in modern India is not prominently visible, as very few followers remain.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The mode of ignorance.

[2] In the scriptures animal sacrifice is specified to enable society to gradually rise above violent tendencies.

[3] *Suta* means "son."

[4] *Sukla-paksha*: The moonlit half of a lunar month-the bright fortnight.

[5] *yaishōha*: The 2nd month of the Hindu (Lunar) calendar (Summer).

[6] *Pausha*: the 9th month of the Hindu (Lunar) Calendar (Winter).

[7] Vaishakha month: the 1st month of the Hindu (Lunar) Calendar.

[8] Lankavatara-sutra was published with the help of the Indian Buddhist Text Society and Bengal Government in January 1900 A.D.

[9] In the 21st issue of the 18th volume of Gaudiya (Magazine), in the articles of Srila Saccidananda Bhaktivinoda Thakura entitled, 'Pracchanna Bauddha and Nastikyavada' (Disguised Bauddha and Atheism) and 'Gautama' as well as in the book 'Sri Gaudiya Darshana: History and Elements' by Sri Sundarananda Vidyavinoda (a disciple of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura), the name of Sakyasimha Gautama Buddha has rarely appeared while writing about the Buddhist philosophy. Pūjyapada Tridandi Svami Srimad Bhakti Prajnana Keshava Maharaja, the beloved disciple of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Thakura and founder of Sri Gaudiya Vedanta Samiti, in his writing, 'Mayavadera Jivani' (The Life History of Impersonalism), has written: "The lila of the Supreme Lord, the expansion of the Lord, Buddha, appeared around 3500 B.C." (Page 74) "Nihilistic Siddhartha was the disciple of Sage Gautama of Kapila's lineage. Therefore, his other name is Gautama." (Page 14) "Sakyasimha Buddha appeared around five hundred years before." (Page 18)

[10] Buddha married Yashodhara at the age of sixteen years. Buddha renounced the world at the age of twenty-nine years. He attained emancipation at the age of eighty years (New Bengali Dictionary of Ashutosh Dev)

[11] Gaya Region: This is famous as Bodha Gaya or Buddha Gaya. This is the most important pilgrimage place of Buddhists. This place was famous even before the time of Christ. The remains of the Mahabodhi Temple and the Stupa (monument), built by King Ashoka, are evidence of its fame and antiquity. The Pippala tree (*ficus religiosa*), under which Buddha attained enlightenment, is still there today. In the journey diary of the Chinese traveller, Fahiyen, a description of the Mahabodhi Temple of Uruvilva has been provided.

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